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ABSTRACT

The relevance of Richard E. Neustadt's presidential choice making theory to a university presidency is analyzed. This theory, which was introduced in Neustadt's 1960 publication "Presidential Power," is examined in regard to situations that occurred at Kent State University (KSU): the KSU Black United Student (BUS) confrontation with the Oakland Police in 1968; the Students for Democratic Society's disciplinary hearing conflict in 1969; the May 1970 crisis in which four students were killed by Ohio National Guardsmen; and the approaches of two KSU presidents in handling BUS demands. It is suggested that the following concepts help to explain presidential decision making: personality, experience, competing information sources, active participant involvement, self-imposed deadlines, and vantage points. In addition to having the right kind of personality and political experience, the university president needs to be an active participant in events. Personal involvement helps the president in avoiding heavy reliance on competing sources of information. The president should impose specific time deadlines and make use of vantage points and perception of power stakes to make the right decision. Making the right choices aids the current bargaining and increases the president's professional reputation and his popular prestige. (SW)

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NEUSTADT'S PRESIDENTIAL POWER AND UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

by

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Although the presidency is one of the most studied institutions, the publication of Richard E. Neustadt's Presidential Power in 1960 was the major breakthrough toward understanding the presidential power.[1] Neustadt's ideas have been analyzed but many of his concepts have not been applied to presidential power in a private government. In the preface of his Presidential Power Neustadt states that "it (how to be on the top in fact as well as name) is a problem also for the heads of private governments, for corporation presidents, trade union leaders, churchmen."[2] This article applies some of Neustadt's choice making concepts to a university presidency. Instead of being a test of Neustadt's theories of presidential decision making, this effort is designed to determine the relevance of choice making concepts to a university presidency. The paper seeks to clarify Neustadt's presidential choice making theory and determine whether the concepts are amenable to a university presidency.

In order to analyze Neustadt's choice making concepts in a university setting, Kent State University, a large institution of about 20,000 students, was selected. Four well publicized and documented incidents were chosen for analysis. Three of these situations occurred during the administration of KSU president, Robert I. White, the KSU Black United Student (BUS) confrontation with the Oakland Police in 1968, the Students for Democratic Society (SDS) disciplinary hearing conflict in 1969, and the tragic May 1970 crisis in which four students were killed by the Ohio National Guardsmen. President Glenn A. Olds' handling of the BUS demands in relation to the 1972 student deaths at

Southern University will be contrasted with his predecessor's (White) approach.

In an article reviewing Presidential Power, Peter W. Sperlich contends Neustadt's right choices are "those that improve general power prospects while achieving a favorable bargain in the immediate situation."[3] Sperlich maintains the prerequisites of making right choices are right personality characteristics and temperament. In order to clarify and operationalize these concepts, the following personality traits are identified: ability to deal with different types of people, extroverted, and speaker effectiveness. According to Neustadt the best political experience is government executive experience. In today's setting the best experience for a university president is negotiation skill acquired from sources such as lawyer, labor negotiator, government negotiator, and university administrator. Like the national President, the university presidency is no place for an amateur, but the problem is in identifying the factors for the making of a professional.

The right kind of personality and political experience constitute the ingredients needed for interior resources to assure presidential self help. To effectively utilize power, the university president should be an active participant in events in order to depend less on other people for facts. Supplemental information from competing levels and perspectives would be sought. Personal involvement helps the president in avoiding heavy reliance on competing sources of information. Competing information comes from "tough" non-academic administrators and campus police, and often from "conciliatory" academic administrators and faculty. The President imposes specific time deadlines and make use of

vantage points and perception of power stakes to make the right decisions. Making the right choices aids the current bargaining, and increases the president's professional reputation and his popular prestige. Neustadt contends the popular prestige of the president increases his professional reputation as Washingtonians are dependent on public support.[4]

Other studies on private governments discuss specific leadership power problems related to the University presidency. In discussing the role of the University president, John J. Corson emphasizes the administrative aspects of the job. Analysis of how presidents of longer institutions

> spend their time do not reveal a statesman, educator, and modern day Mr. Chips or Mark Hopkins. Rather they depict the University president as an executive concerned predominantly with financial matters, public relations, physical facilities and other administrative affairs. They picture the University president as spending less than one-fifth of his time working on educational matters and keeping in touch with his faculty or with his students.[5]

The University president's decision-making role "is usually small," as Corson further notes, but "is often large when the going gets rough ..... His own participation in the area of decison-making, except in times of emergency is precluded by other demands on his time."[6] Instead, most of the president's time is allotted to financial matters and public and alumni relations, and general administration. The problem of conflicting time demands may cause acute problems of internal communication.[7] One study suggests that some presidents are cut off by overconscientious sides or secretaries and others are seldom seen on campus and never talk with students and seldom with faculty.[8]

The University presidents' constituency includes a broad

segment of the population and requires bargaining with groups having divergent views on important issues. State and governmental agencies controlling funds have much power. Groups affecting or influencing those controlling the funds or legal powers related to higher education must also be respected. The local civic and political leaders, business groups, voters and mass media representatives needed to be handled with caution as those groups are involved in the decision-making process of the university president.

The first incident discussed is the 1968 Black United Students (BUS) incident. Black students physically blocked students who were seeking interviews with Oakland, California police officials at the KSU placement center. BUS contended that the Oakland police were racist and, therefore, should not be allowed access to interview students at KSU. The physical blockade of Oakland police by BUS created a law and order situation in the campus. In the event of this incident KSU president was forced to make some crucial decisions. The president did not come to observe the demonstration and did not talk to the protestors. Rather the KSU president relied on information from major non-academic administrators. President White apparently relied on the traditional hierarchial model for information.

The BUS incident mounted pressure on the office of KSU president and different courses of action were proposed to neutralize the effects of the incident. The president indicated a disruption of University activities had occurred and that University disciplinary procedures must be imposed. In pursuance with the President's directive the Dean of Students, warned protestors that

charges would be brought against those who continued to sit-in and block the interview; charges could lead to expulsion or suspension. BUS demonstrators remained until later when they voluntarily ended their sit-in. Before charges were filed BUS circulated petitions demanding that the University administration grant amnesty, which meant that the University would involve no sanction against the students or organizations involved in the sit-in. BUS campaigned for several thousand signatures. Apparently most faculty supported the KSU president but a minority of faculty sympathized with the BUS demands for amnesty. The sociology department proposed that the President have the dispute arbitrated by major political and educational leaders. President White did not take any action on this arbitration suggestion.

Under the pressure of a threatened black student walkout, President White announced that students would be charged with a lesser offense than previously considered. Students would be charged with disorderly conduct which involves only a sanction of conduct probation and not suspension or expulsion. BUS was not satisfied, and several hundred black students walked off the Kent campus demanding full amnesty.

The president admitted internal administrative problems due to time deadlines. The administration was too slow, he said, in moving at the time of the incident and this may have produced more confusion.

Several days after the walkout the president reversed his previous position and announced no charges would be filed against the students. The reason given was that there was a lack of evidence against specific individuals. Pursuing the case, he said,

would not be in accord with due process. Reliable legal information indicates a lack of sufficient evidence would result in a reversal of any convictions that might be obtained. Charges were not brought even though some administrative officials may have been unhappy with this decision. The president said amnesty was not granted as no charges had ever been brought. Black students returned to campus claiming a victory.

Neustadt's model will be used to analyze the process for making right decisions. The president was not an active participant and relied on others for information. He did not, at first, introduce competing information sources into the system. President White had experience in negotiating from teaching and administration. President White's professional reputation presumably suffered because of lack of consistency in decision making on sanctions against protesting BUS students. Some viewed the decision not to bring charges as humanistic in that black students returned to campus. BUS recognized the toughness of university policy and took steps to prevent black involvement in incidents that did not directly affect the black community.

In the 1969 SDS incident about sixty KSU students were charged with disrupting disciplinary hearings.[9] As with the BUS incident a disruption of University activities was involved. In this instance there was also limited damage to university property. President Whie, as in the BUS affair, contended a violation of rules was assumed. Instead of handling the incident through University channels as with BUS, students were arrested and charged with various crimes.

The students involved were immediately suspended from the

university subject to later hearings for reinstatement. This procedure was used even though the student conduct code did not specifically provide for immediate suspension. Numerous procedural violations allegedly occurred in the reinstatement hearings including improper notification, conflicting roles of officials, and lack of evidence and meeting the burden of proof.

This apparent failure to observe the student conduct code was in sharp contrast to the previous presidential mandate in the BUS incident to play according to the rules of due process. One competing administrator of a "conciliatory" nature dropped suspension charges against nine students, but his power was then withdrawn. Charges remained against most students.

Most faculty supported the president, but an ad hoc group of students and a limited number of faculty was formed to urge dropping of charges against student protestors. The group, 3-C (Concerned Citizens of the Kent State Community) conducted meetings and marches in which thousands participated. 3-C encountered problems with use of University facilities for speaking and running off material. Officials actively supported student leaders who opposed 3-C and some of the 3-C leadership was discredited.

The pressures from state officials and influential members of the public had more profound impact on the president. President White candidly stated in regards to the disruptions:

> Kent State University's role in the entire state pattern: appropriations, centralized control out of Columbus, out-of-state students, student fees, hopes for new programs or maintenance of present ones, buildings and others are all at stake.[10]

A special committee of the American Association of University Professors commented on these pressures:

> The political climate of the state and nation was and is, such that the Administration was under considerable pressure to deal harshly with student unrest. Doubtless many state residents felt that the University had taken an unjustifiably 'soft' line last November when the Administration capitulated for lack of sufficient evidence in the BUS incident.[11]

During this incident the president did not observe the demonstrations or protests. As in the BUS event, he relied on information from non-competing sources within his administration. The approach was a more stringent law and order one than pursued in the BUS incident. Officials may have felt strict enforcement was what the president desired and/or was in the best interests of the president.

The lack of bargaining by the president raises a question related to Neustadt's analysis. According to Sperlich, the fundamental weakness of bargaining was a:

> lack of attention to psychodynamics, especially the non-instrumental motivations among the recipients of presidential requests. Just as not everyone in the presidential environment can be a bargainer, not everyone wants to be a bargainer....Is it inconceivable that some persons may genuinely want to help a president?[12]

Kent officials apparently wished to help the president. Despite the departure from the due process concern of BUS, officials probably perceived a tough line was favored. Possibly, the prior concern with due process was an afterthought forced by cascading events.

The SDS decisions were consistent, which results in a growth in professional reputation. On the other hand, the process of decision-making did not conform to the Neustadt approach. Furthermore, the hard line approach led to a decline of the popular prestige of the president among some students. Administrators were

not affected as they are not very dependent upon student support. Thus, the Kent analysis demonstrates impact of the decision on students was not sufficiently covered.

The third event is the May 1970[13] incident which led to four student deaths at Kent State University. The president was out of town on University business the first two days of protest. When he returned the day before the shootings, $10,000 worth of downtown windows were broken, the wooden R.O.T.C. building on campus was burned to the ground, and the national guard was on campus. While the president was in Iowa he was informed of events over the telephone by non-academic vice-presidents and police officials. He was initially told that the events did not appear serious enough for him to return. The burning of the R.O.T.C. building and the national guard on campus led to his returning to Kent. The president's information apparently came from key officials without a competing view from faculty.

The pressures from state government officials and influential members of the public and administrative officials were strong. The governor of Ohio met White at the airport on White's return to Kent and told him, "They are trying to close you down. Don't give in. Stay open."[14] The president reportedly received many communications from throughout the state urging a tough stance and to continue University operations.

Upon return to the campus the president continued to rely upon others for gathering information instead of being an active participant in events. He did not attend rallies nor did he talk to militant students or schedule an early faculty meeting. In one instance a request by militant students blocking traffic was rejected

The students wished to talk directly to the president, but the request was rejected by a non-academic vice-president. The vice-president claimed the president agreed not to talk to the students. The president, however, could not remember the request according to the President's Commission on Campus Unrest.[15]

The Faculty Senate's role was limited to organizing marshalls. An ad hoc group of faculty members called for removal of the national guard from campus. The ad hoc group also requested an immediate faculty meeting that same evening to give input to the presdient. The president rejected the request stating that such proposals should come from the Faculty Senate. A meeting with the president was finally scheduled for the next day, but it did not occur due to the deaths of the students.[16]

The president, according to the report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest, did not object to the presence of the guard on campus and did not cancel classes until after the shootings. More active presidential involvement, competing sources of information, and self-imposed deadlines may have resulted in different decisions. The president did not have to bargain with administrative officials who presumably favored a tough policy approach.

By way of contrast, a later Kent State University president, Dr. Glenn A. Olds, was more successful in resolving a conflict involving BUS demands. After two Southern University black students were killed on November 16, 1972, BUS presented a list of seven demands to Kent State University including lowering the flag at half-mast during football game time, discussion of the event in classes, and paying expenses to attend the funeral. Possibly because Dr. Olds, a former official with the United Nations, had

the personality and the experience needed to deal with such disputes, the matter was quickly resolved. Timing was important. The issues were resolved before community and conservative reaction had time to demand a tough stance. Dr. Olds spoke directly with black leaders and thus was an active participant who did not have to rely primarily on other people for information. The incident was not as serious as those facing President White, but President Olds was able to defuse a potentially controversial matter. In doing so Olds increased his standing with many students without antagonizing other groups such as community leaders and state officials.

Neustadt's model on choice making is a useful analytical tool in private university 'governments'. Concepts such as the following are helping in explaining presidential decision-making; personality, experience, competing information sources, active participant involvement, self-imposed deadlines, and vantage points. Neustadt's model of presidential decision-making is an ideal and in reality no president can do or accomplish more than approximate an ideal type of presidency.

NOTES

[1]Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power, The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980). This is the updated edition.

[2]Ibid, p. v.

[3]A call for presidential research in this area was made in Peter W. Sperlich, "Bargaining and Overload: An Essay on Presidential Power," in Aaron Wildavsky, ed., The Presidency (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1969), pp. 168-192.

[4]Neustadt, op. cit., pp. 60-63.

[5]John J. Corson, Governance of Colleges and Universities (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1960), pp. 60-61. Other works of particular value in understanding the role of contemporary university presidents include Richard C. Richardson, Jr., Clyde E. Blocker and Louis W. Bender, Governance for the Two-Year College (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972); Clark Kerr, The Uses of the University (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963); Stephen R. Graubard and Geno A. Ballotti, ed., The Embattled University (New York: George Braziller, 1970); David D. Dill, Case Studies in University Governance (Washington, D.C.: National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 1971); and John J. Corson, The Governance of Colleges and Universities: Modernizing Structures and Processes (New York: McGraw-Hill,

1975).

[6]Corson, ibid., p. 64.

[7]Ibid., pp. 132-133.

[8]Campus Tensions: Analysis and Recommendations (Report of the Special Committee on Campus Tensions. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1970), p. 45. See Herbert A. Simon, "The Job of a College President," Educational Record, 48 (Winter, 1967), pp. 68-78 for additional evidence on this point.

[9]Kent Chapter of the American Association of University Professors. Special Committee of Inquiry, Report (Kent, Ohio, 1969).

[10]Kent Stater, April 18, 1969.

[11]Kent Chapter, op. cit., p. 20.

[12]Sperlich, op. cit., p. 190.

[13]The President's Commission on Campus Unrest, The Report of The President's Commission on Campus Unrest (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970); Byron G. Lander, "Kent State University's Organized Response to May 1-4: A Study in Administrative Confusion," Political Science Discussion Papers, 3 (May, 1971), pp. 104-138.

[14]President's Commission on Campus Unrest , ibid., p. 255.

[15]Ibid., p. 257.

[16]"If the president wishes to influence a faculty, he must in turn be prepared to be influenced by them." Richardson, Blocker and Bender, op. cit., p. 130.